On Political Communication: Is Social Media More Effective?

Fitriyasa Meiserli
Universitas Sains Al Qur'an
fitriyasa75@gmail.com

Abstract

The effectiveness of political communication is a necessary result to build a synergistic political system. Many media are used for political communication. Recently, mass media like printed and electronic media are not only the communication platforms. There is also social media considered very influential on the political communication. The model of political communication that occurs in the digital era is now very different from the last few years. Media or forums for political communication are already very diverse. In this era, all political communication media can be done on social media platforms. With social media, many barriers can be minimized. It cuts the costs and is more practical to build communication between public officials and their constituents. Yet, the absent of physical presence in social media could undermine how effective is indirect-communication without having a face-to-face or physical meeting. Does social media provide more effective features in the way of political communication? This study discusses several essential things in building and measuring the effectiveness of political communication between public officials and the community regarding the current development of communication.

Keywords: political communication, social media, indirect-communication

Background: Understanding Political Communication

Political communication, according to Gabriel Almond (1960) is a function that is always present in every political system. Therefore, political communication is very dependent on the political system, starting from the political system, political socialization, and recruitment, articulation of interests, aggregation of claims, policy formulation, and application of policies formed in communication. Communication is closely related to the political system adopted by a country (Jones, 2018).

In democracy, the people's mandate is a necessity. All serving public officials should maintain this to gain legitimacy from the people regarding their existence and character. Political communication is defined as a communication directed at

achieving an influence that the problems discussed by this communication activity can bind its citizens through sanctions determined by political institutions. The result is expected to be beneficial for all people because of well-established political communication (Arifin, 2011).

According to Denton and Woodward (2013), political communication is defined as "… *the allocation of public resources (revenues), official authority (who given the power to make legal, legislative and executive decisions) and official sanctions (what the state rewards or punishes)*". In this sense, communication looks stiff and formal. Meanwhile, McNair (2017) states that political communication is communication that includes several things, namely: (1) All forms of communication carried out by politicians and other political actors to achieve specific goals; (2) Communication aimed at political actors who are not politicians, such as voters and newspaper columnists; and (3) Communication about political actors and their activities as contained in news reports, editorials, and other forms of discussion about politics.

The Social Media

Nowadays, digital communication media is widespread. Unlike a few years ago, it is easier for the public to get information (Dwyer & Martin, 2017). The media in the digital era is now more diverse, so that the media as a liaison between political institutions and society is increasingly varied (Helberger, 2018). Hence, social media has the following functions: (1) Social media is media designed to expand human social interaction using the internet and web technology; (2) Transforming the practice of indirect-communication broadcast media from one media institution to many audiences (one to many) into the method of indirectional dialogical between many audiences (many to many); (3) Support the democratization of knowledge and information; and (4) Transforming humans from the user of the message content to the maker of the message itself.

Social media also has a function as well as mass media. According to McQuail (1992), the primary role of the media for society is as a medium of information,

innovation, adaptation, and progress. Social media also have functions to explain, interpret, comment on the meaning of events and information, support established authorities and norms, coordinate several activities, form agreements, and enhance or preserve values (Pathak, 2019).

The existence of social media adds a forum for carrying out political communication. Although the direct dialogic communication model has been very abandoned, it is hoped that this social media can still be established even though it is in a virtual form. Social media offers practicality and a wide range of communication. The broad reach, simultaneous, and outstanding achievements make the political communication model more efficient. Although this convenience sometimes does not go hand in hand with the neutrality of the media as a liaison between public officials and the people. According to Wibowo (2013, p. 10), mass media is the second reality. Thus, the space created between actual reality and derivative reality saves sociological, cultural, and technological processes that make it have implications for creating a new reality, which is its impact on the audience. Media messages are a social construction. Political consequences of the media are not the result nature of the press but instead are born of the manipulative character of the media (Goryacheva & Kalinina, 2019).

Now the question is about the neutrality of the media as a source of political information. At the same time, we all know that the mass media owners are mostly party officials. Through the mass media, the public can easily access various political information, but the public also needs to be wise in absorbing the information provided by the mass media.

Apart from the media, several components support the occurrence of political communication. Communication consists of several parts, namely actors, constituents, messages, media, and reactions. When described, several components of political communication (Wibowo, 2013, p. 240) are as follows: (1) Political communication actors are politicians, professionals, and activists. Politicians aspire to hold positions in government, such as political party activists, members of parliament, ministers, and so on; (2) Message is the problem conveyed in political communication; (3) Media is a

tool used to transfer messages from the source to the recipient. There are communication media in the form of personal channels, group media, and some are in the form of mass media; (4) Community or constituents. The definition of constituents has several opinions, including voters in the electoral district, supporters of political parties, mandated parties who must be given responsibility, represented communities, or target groups that must be served by parties or members of parliament; (5) The reaction of constituents or the public's perception of political communication actors.

Effectiveness of Political Communication

The effectiveness of political communication has many meanings. The notion of effectiveness is how well the work is done and the extent to which people produce outputs as expected. This means that it is effective if a process that runs according to planning and goals is by the desired results.

The effectiveness of political communication is the receipt of messages between political communicators to the community so that there is uniformity. Political communication can be effective if it fulfills the purpose of communication itself, namely perception. Perception is the core of communication. Interpretation is the core of perception, which is identical to the encoding behind the communication process. Perception is decisive in receiving messages and ignoring other messages (Wibowo, 2013, p. 134).

The components in determining the effectiveness of political communicators are: (1) Credibility: source credibility refers to the extent to which the source is seen as having expertise and being trusted. The more expert and trusted the information source, the more meaningful the message will be. Credibility includes the expertise of the authority and the trustworthiness of the original; (2) Attractiveness: a communicator can occur because of physical appearance, style of speech, personal traits, intimacy, performance, communication skills, and behavior. Physical attractiveness is a prerequisite for personality; (3) Similarity: in this context, it is

similarity in terms of needs, expectations, and feelings. From the audience's point of view, the source is a fun source, which means the positive feeling that consumers have towards the source of information. Pleasant sources mean the positive emotions that consumers have towards sources of information (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, pp. 107–108).

The components above are things needed by political communicators or here public officials to realize the effectiveness of political communication. who can conclude from the description above that five components become a reference for the realization of the point of political communication, namely as follows:

1. Political Communicator (Public Official): (a) Ability to respond to society; (b) Physical and non-physical attractiveness; (c) Similarity.

2. Message, the structure of the messages conveyed in the communication forum: (a) Growing people's attention; (b) The language used can be clearly understood by the public; (c) How to deliver concrete, detailed and specific sentences with evidence supporting the opinion

3. Media/communication channels: (a) The intensity of communication; (2) Emotional approach; (c) Personal branding.

4. Society: Increased public participation in government policies.

5. Reaction: Community understanding and perception

One of the things that public officials must own as political communicators is the ability to communicate properly in the public. Being a good communicator involves speaking skills. This affects the credibility of a political communicator. Public officials must have an adequate intellectual level in responding to the aspirations of the community. The credibility of public officials is determined by the way a public official responds to every problem faced by the community. The intellectual level referred to here is how this public official knows something but understands who he/she is talking about. The ability to respond to every response and aspiration of the community can show how the communication style of public officials is. Good

communication skills can give the public confidence in the government, especially the public officials (Argyle & Collett, 2019).

The ability to speak and respond to every response and problem issued by the community is required. The physical ability also determines how the public evaluates the public official. A neat, simple, and unpretentious appearance can give a good figure to the community (Mohan, 2019).

At the same time, the ability to communicate with a public official is also influenced by non-physical factors, such as charisma and polite behavior, so that people can easily sympathize with the public official. The choice of words and a sense of similarity can also give the public a good impression of public officials. Public officials who always provide equality between expectations and needs generate high trust in public officials and influence the policies taken to meet the community's aspirations. So that people believe in the ability of these public officials to accommodate and deliver their aspirations as expected by the public.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of political communication is significant in democratic life. The ideal political communication system should be following the democratic system. A democratic system that requires power to be in the hands of the people means two-way communication. Both from public officials to the community and the community to public officials. It is hoped that the function of political communication is to link the interests and authorities of political office holders, elites, and the community.

To achieve the goal of the effectiveness of political communication, it should fulfill several components of the point of political contact. The pieces themselves start from communicators with credibility, attractiveness, similarities messages, and the resulting reactions. The effectiveness of political communication can be said to be effective if it is under the objectives of political communication itself. There is a match between expectations and reality. The essence of communication itself is the reaction.

The core of the response is the public's understanding and perception of the ongoing political process.

The reaction is one indication of effective communication. This can be seen from public trust in the government or officials in general, and political actors in particular. The reaction obtained results from the effectiveness of ongoing political communication—the more effective, the more positive the response shown by the community. Mass media and social media have entirely influenced the current phenomenon of political communication channels/containers. Direct face-to-face communication that is dialogical has been very abandoned. The nature of the media, which is practical, fast, and has a broad reach, is used by public officials to carry out political communication. However, the facilities offered by mass media and social media have weaknesses. The manipulative nature of the media causes people to be further away from the facts.

Although face-to-face political communication, that is dialogical, is starting to be abandoned because the mass media replace it, face-to-face political communication still has high effectiveness because of direct meetings. This creates a heightened sense of community. Although nowadays social media can also carry out virtual dialogue discussions, it cannot replace face-to-face political communication. The weakness of this face-to-face political communication is the wasteful cost because not all areas can be easily reached. Indeed, the use of media is very influential, even when nowadays social media have emerged providing more advantages. But the manipulative nature of the media can also affect the effectiveness of political communication. Although dialogue and face-to-face communication have been abandoned, they also have a good effect in producing high influence, something that can not be found in social media.

References

Almond, G. A. (1960). Public opinion and the development of space technology. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 24(4), 553–572.

Argyle, M., & Collett, P. (2019). Social skills and intercultural communication in politics. In *Experimentation and Simulation in Political Science* (pp. 162–174). University of Toronto Press.

Arifin, A. (2011). Komunikasi politik. *Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu*.

Dwyer, T., & Martin, F. (2017). Sharing news online: Social media news analytics and their implications for media pluralism policies. *Digital Journalism*, 5(8), 1080–1100.

Goryacheva, O. N., & Kalinina, G. S. (2019). The manipulative capacity of mass media. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, 7(6), 491–494.

Helberger, N. (2018). Challenging Diversity-Social Media Platforms and a New Conception of Media Diversity. *Digital Dominance. The Power of Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple*, 153–175.

Jones, B. (2018). The mass media and political communication. In *Politics UK* (pp. 180–202). Routledge.

McNair, B. (2017). *An introduction to political communication*. Routledge.

McQuail, D. (1992). *Media performance: Mass communication and the public interest*. Sage.

Mohan, B. (2019). *Understanding Public Speaking: A Learner's Guide to Persuasive Oratory*. Routledge India.

Pathak, R. (2019). The role and functions of social media in socialization. *Vidyawarta*.

Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1981). *Attitudes and persuasion: Classic and contemporary approaches* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Wibowo, P. A. (2013). *Mahalnya demokrasi, memudarnya ideologi: Potret komunikasi politik legislator-konstituen*. Penerbit Kompas.

Woodward, G. C., & Denton Jr, R. E. (2013). *Persuasion and influence in American life*. Waveland Press.